

ALCOHOL

History	Alcohol has featured in most cultures that have existed in some form or another. In Britain the history of its use has swung between periods of heavy use and periods of relative restraint, for example under the influence of the Temperance Movement. In recent years, alcohol has re-emerged as a health issue with concerns about its impact on heart disease, stroke risk, blood pressure and cancers. A quarter of men and one in six women drink at 'hazardous' levels. Alcohol is easily produced through fermentation of fruit or grain mixtures or the distillation of fermented fruit or grain mixtures (spirits such as whiskey, rum, vodka and gin are distilled.)
Street name	Booze, bevvvy, swally, jake.
Type	Downer
Drug Effect	Depressant (downer). Effects vary according to the amount of alcohol consumed, the physique, mental state and tolerance level of the drinker and range from a state of moderate euphoria to coma and, in the worst cases, death. Alcohol use is also associated with aggressive and violent behaviour and risky sexual practices. Users sometimes experience blackouts preventing recall of events. Drinking too much dehydrates the body and irritates the stomach, causing a hangover, symptoms of which include headache, stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, lethargy, shaking and sweating.
Dependency	Yes
Description	Liquid – beers and ales, wines, fortified wines, spirits.
Street use	Swallowed.
Withdrawal	<p>Physical withdrawal symptoms can range from the mildly annoying to severe and even life-threatening. Symptoms can appear within a few hours of stopping drinking. For some, withdrawal symptoms might be as 'mild' as merely getting the shakes, or the sweats – or perhaps nausea, headache, anxiety, a rapid heartbeat, and increased blood pressure.</p> <p>After 6 to 48 hours, hallucinations may develop, usually visual but can also involve sounds and smells. These can last for a few hours up to weeks at a time. Convulsions or seizures may occur which are dangerous if not medically treated. The symptoms of delirium tremens (DTs) can appear after three to five days without alcohol. The symptoms of DTs include profound confusion, disorientation, hallucinations, hyperactivity, and extreme cardiovascular</p>

	<p>disturbances. Grand mal seizures, heart attacks and stroke can occur during the DTs, all of which can be fatal. Withdrawal from alcohol can be physically and mentally difficult; given its high social acceptance, it remains a hard drug to avoid in daily life. It can cause serious physical symptoms in withdrawal</p>
<p>Long term use</p>	<p>Excessive use of alcohol can have a devastating impact on health. Alcohol is associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach problems: cancers of the stomach, ulcers, gastritis. • High blood pressure, weight gain, circulatory and nervous system problems. • Brain damage, heart disease, damage to the liver, cancers of the mouth and throat. <p>High levels of alcohol use in a single session can lead to unconsciousness, coma and possibly death. The risks of dangerous alcohol overdose are increased by mixing alcohol with other drugs. Key risks come from mixing alcohol with stimulants (such as cocaine) which allow people to drink larger amounts in the short term, but leave the person dangerously intoxicated once stimulants have worn off. The other key risks come from mixing alcohol with sedating drugs, especially opiates and benzodiazepines. The combined effect of alcohol with these drugs significantly increases the risk of fatality.</p> <p>Because alcohol can have a significant disinhibiting effect, it may be a factor in reckless behaviours including episodes of unplanned drug taking, unsafe sex, offending or other risk taking.</p> <p>Alcohol use during pregnancy can damage the foetus and, exceptionally, can lead to a set of birth defects known as foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). Alcohol use can lead to physical and psychological dependency. Regular use leads to tolerance where more alcohol is required to achieve intoxication.</p> <p>Alcohol is also a key factor in many social and industrial accidents, and a contributory factor in many fights and domestic incidents.</p>
<p>Overdose</p>	<p>Alcohol has a depressant effect on respiration and excessive use can suppress breathing completely. Users can also die as a result of inhaling vomit whilst unconscious.</p>
<p>Legal Status</p>	<p>Alcohol is covered by licensing laws and other regulations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 5: It is illegal to give alcohol to a child under five years old in any circumstances excepting on the orders of a doctor. • 5+: It is legal for children over the age of five to drink alcohol on private premises, such as in the home.

- 14+: Young people between the ages of fourteen and seventeen may be in a bar during opening hours but may not buy, be bought or drink alcohol on the premises.
- 16+: Young people sixteen and seventeen years of age may buy or be bought certain drinks in licensed premises but only in a separate eating area and only for consumption with a meal. The permitted drinks in England and Wales are beer, cider and perry. In Scotland, they may also purchase and consume wine with the meal.
- Under 18: It is illegal for any person under eighteen years of age to buy any alcohol from an off license. It is also illegal to attempt to buy alcohol or for someone else to buy it in order to supply it to someone under the age of 18.
- Confiscation of Alcohol (young Persons) Act 1997: Empowers police to require under 18s to hand over alcohol in a public place. Failure to do so (without reasonable cause) and give name and address when requested summary offence and carries power of arrest.

Other

Local by-laws re. Public drinking: many areas prohibit this and this can lead to a fine. Drunk and disorderly, Drink driving, Drunk in charge of a vehicle